ERIC Document Resume	See Instruction Sheet	DATE OF RESUME	DATE RECEIVED

A. PUBLICATION DATA

1. ERIC ACCESSION NO.	2. ORIGINATOR CONTROL NO(S).	3. IDENTIFICATION NO.	DO NOT WRITE IN SPACE BELOW
ED002600	N.A.	N.A.	

4. AUTHOR(S): Fry, Edward

5. TITLE OF DOCUMENT ABSTRACTED: Are Reading Readiness Materials Necessary in the First Grade?

6. PUBLICATION TITLE: N.A.

7. EDITOR(S):	8. PLACE OF ORIGIN	MICROFILM COPY AVAILABLE
N.A.	Rutgers,	YES ☒ NO ☐
9. PUBLISHER OR SOURCE: Rutgers - The State University, New Brunswick, N. J.	ORG. New Brunswick,	COPYRIGHT GRANTED YES ☐ NO ☒
	ST. New Jersey	COPYRIGHT RELEASE FILED YES ☐ NO ☐
	CITY, STATE	TYPE OF REPORT PROPOSAL ☐ IN-PROGRESS ☒ FINAL ☐ FOLLOW-UP ☐
	TELE EXT.	OTHER ERIC REFERENCES:
	INST/LOC CODE	ERIC SATELLITE CODE

10. VOL.	11. PAGES	12. MO./YR.	13. TOTAL PP.
N.A.	N.A.	2/65	7

B. INDEXING DATA

14. SUBJECT AREA	15. TYPE OF ENDEAVOR
	Speech

16. INDEXING TERMS (6-12)

reading readiness	materials	reading achievement	elementary education	
test results		reading instruction		

17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

A study to determine if reading readiness materials are necessary in the first grade reveals that they are not. The experiment was conducted in public schools of a suburban middle class community in New Jersey. Tests were administered to all pupils in September of the first grade. No reading instruction had been given in kindergarten and no published reading readiness materials were used. Pupils in the readiness group were given readiness workbooks and reading instruction in preprimers and primers. Pupils in the nonreadiness group were given reading instruction in preprimers and primers of a different, but comparable, series. Each class in both groups was divided into three separate reading groups. When tests were administered in December, nonreadiness groups were definitely ahead in progress, undoubtedly because more time was spent in teaching reading. Tables showing results of testing accompany the text.

ERIC Rc.	18. SOURCE OF ABSTRACT	
	C. FUNDING DATA	
	19. SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION	20. DIVISION OR DEPT. / 22. TOTAL COST OF PROJECT / 23. DURATION OR PROJECT
		21. CONTRACT NO. / PROJECT NO.
		U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Office of Education

ERIC Form 1

ED002600 Ferkauf Graduate School of Education, Yeshiva University

T19
L37
L39

ARE READING READINESS MATERIALS NECESSARY IN THE FIRST GRADE?*

By Edward Fry
Rutgers-The State University
New Brunswick, N.J.

"...in a changing climate of opinion about the optimum time for beginning reading or the study of certain types of reading materials, the problem of reading readiness should be considered." David Russell and Henry Fea in the Handbook of Research on Teaching, 1963.

Since approximately four million children enter first grade every year, and a majority of them are given one or more reading readiness workbooks costing about 80 cents each, the national expenditure for reading readiness workbooks might be something in the neighborhood of $3,000,000 to $5,000,000. For this rather large expenditure, the cost concious education industry might be expected to get some results for their money, but this is highly doubtful.

The author, who is quite aware of the discrepancy between textbook salesmans' claims for the necessity of reading readiness workbooks and the rather equivocal findings in the literature, had the opportunity through a U.S.Office of Education grant to say, "There shall be no reading readiness workbooks used in these particular first grades". Teachers who asked what to start with were told to use the regular pre-primers. Not only were teachers not allowed to use reading readiness workbooks, but reading readiness tests were also denied them. Grouping at first was in 3 randomly assigned groups; each group was taught reading, but after several weeks teachers regrouped children into fast, average, and slow groups based on success in actual lessons.

However, even experimenters sometimes wonder if they did the correct thing by flying in the face of tradition, and the result is this little study which surveyed some of the literature and compared the results of four experimental first grade classrooms with four first grade classrooms in the same small school district

---

*This study is a minor part of U.S. Office of Education Grant 2745, "First Grade Reading Instruction Using A Diacritical Marking System, The Initial Teaching Alphabet, and a Basic Reading Series"

(Paper presented at American Educational Research Association February 1965)

ED002600

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
Office of Education

This document has been reproduced exactly as received from the person or organization originating it. Points of view or opinions stated do not necessarily represent official Office of Education position or policy.

who were not in the project. A survey was also made of all 25 first grade teachers in the district concerning their opinion on the necessity of continued use of readiness books in first grade.

Survey of the Literature

The investigator was unable to find any studies which strongly favored the use of reading readiness materials. Perhaps the best was Sr.Nila (1958) who had a readiness class of 33 who were two tenths of a year ahead of a non-readiness class at the end of first grade. As opposed to this Durrell (1958) and others who studied 2000 Boston 1st graders found that children with superior backgrounds made better progress when readiness materials were omitted. Waiting until the end of 2nd and 3rd grade to compare a readiness and a non-readiness class did not help much either as reported by Bradley (1956) who found no differences in reading achievement after such delayed measurement.

Nor do the use of reading readiness workbooks in kindergarten help much either. Ploghoft (1959), Collins (1960), and Blakely and Shadle (1961) all found no differences on reading readiness tests when their workbook classes were compared with non-workbook classes.

Finally, Docter (1960,1963) compared workbook and non-workbook classes and concluded that non-workbook materials were superior for the purpose of initiating the reading program in the first grade.

Procedure

The Metropolitan Reading Readiness Test was administered to all pupils in September of first grade. The mean raw score for the 78 pupils in the readiness group was 53.8 and the mean raw score for the 75 non-readiness pupils was 50.2. The difference was not significant at the .05 level.

All children in both groups had had a full year of kindergarten for half a day. No reading instruction is given in kindergarten and no published reading readiness materials were used.

The pupils in the readiness group were all given the reading readiness workbook Before We Read published by Scott Foresman

Company. If teachers felt that some students needed more readiness they were given We Read Pictures. A small portion were still not judged ready to read so they were given We Read More Pictures. As the titles explain, the children who are instructed in these books are not taught to read any words.

No children in the non-readiness group were given any reading readiness published materials, nor was any time allotted to readiness activities. This is not to say that teachers were forbidden to engage in informal classroom activities that many might construe as reading readiness, but the teachers were told to start reading instruction for all children immediately after initial readiness testing was completed.

Reading instruction in the readiness group consisted of pre-primers and primers in the Scott Foresman Series and reading instruction in the non-readiness group consisted of pre-primers and primers in the Allyn and Bacon Series. Despite the different stories the two series are structurally similar. Each has about the same vocabulary load (number of different words introduced in corresponding books) and a similar delayed introduction of phonic skills (neither series teaches any vowel sounds in first grade.)

TABLE 1

Comparison of Total New Words Introduced in Two First Grade Reading Series

	Basal Reading Series	
Books	Scott Foresman	Allyn & Bacon
1st Pre primer	18	17
2nd Pre primer	22	21
3rd Pre primer	32	20
Primer	101	90

All children and teachers were located in the public schools in a small school district of central New Jersey. This is a suburban middle class community.

Results

In mid-December the Instant Word Recognition Test was used for all pupils. This is a research instrument consisting of 24 five choice items. The examiner reads a word aloud and uses it in a sentence while the child marks the correct word. The words were selected from the Instant Words, a high frequency vocabulary broken into groups of the 25 most common words, the 25 next most common words, etc. (Fry 1957) Two items were taken from each group of 25 words. Pupils in the readiness group were able to correctly respond to a mean of 10.2 items while pupils in the non-readiness group were able to respond to a mean of 12.0 items. The difference between the two groups was significant at the .01 level when a one way analysis of covariance was used (correcting for initial differences in the readiness test scores of the two groups) or significant at the .05 level when readiness test scores are not taken into account.

Teachers in the non-readiness classes were definitely ahead in their progress through reading books as can be seen by Table 3. All teachers used three reading groups. In the non-readiness classes all but two low groups were in the primer and these two were in the 3rd pre-primer. In the readiness classes there were only 3 groups in the primer, 4 groups were in the 3rd pre primer, 4 groups were in the 2nd pre-primer, and one was in the 1st pre-primer.

Twenty five teachers comprising all the first grade teachers in the district where the study took place were asked, "Do you feel that commercially prepared reading readiness materials (workbooks entitled Before We Read, We Read Pictures, and We Read More Pictures) are necessary?" This was done before results of this study were known. For their top reading groups 3 answered Yes and 22 answered No; for their middle groups 7 answered Yes and 18 answered No; for their low groups 15 answered Yes and 10 answered No.

The correlation between scores on the Metropolitan Reading Readiness Test and reading achievement as measured by the Instant Word Recognition Test was .56. It is interesting that Gray, (1960)

TABLE 2

COMPARISON OF READINESS AND NON-READINESS READING GROUPS ON THE METROPOLITAN READING READINESS TEST AND INSTANT WORD RECOGNITION TEST

Tests		Readiness Group (N=78)	Non-Readiness Group (N=75)	Significance of Differences
Metropolitan Reading Readiness Test	Mean	53.8	50.2	Not Signif.
	S.D.	16.3	15.9	
Instant Word Test	Mean	10.2	12.0	P = <.01*
	S.D.	5.56	5.9	

*Analysis of variance gave an F of 4.10 significant at the .05 level and analysis of covariance gave an F of 11.40 significant at the .01 level.

TABLE 3

PROGRESS THROGH READING SERIES BY MID-DECEMBER OF READINESS AND NON-READINESS GROUPS

Teacher	Top Group	Mid-Group	Low Group
READINESS GROUP			
N	3rd Pre-primer	2nd Pre-primer	2nd Pre-primer
O	Primer	Primer	2nd Pre-primer
P	3rd Pre-primer	3rd Pre-primer	1st Pre-primer
Y	Primer	3rd Pre-primer	2nd Pre-primer
NON-READINESS GROUP			
E	Primer	Primer	3rd Pre-primer
F	Primer	Primer	3rd Pre-primer
G	Primer	Primer	Primer
H	Primer	Primer	Primer

reporting a study by Senour done in 1937, comparing the Metropolitan Readiness Test and reading achievement, found a correlation of .54. That's real progress in 27 years.

Conclusions

While this study may not sound the death knell for reading readiness workbooks, it is considerably less than a recommendation.

The fact that the non-readiness group scored significantly better on the mid-December reading test is not a good omen for readiness workbooks. Results at the end of first and second grades might be more meaningful however. Bradley's study doesn't give us much hope of eventual superiority for those who had the use of readiness workbooks. These results plus the other studies found in the literature indicate that the experimenter at least wasn't completely wrong in decreeing that, "There shall be no reading readiness in first grade". School superintendents who have to justify book expenditures to school boards might expect to have an increasingly difficult time in asking for more money when there is so little proof that some of their money is going for worthwhile materials now.

Undoubtedly, part of the reason that the non-readiness group came out ahead was simply that more time was spent teaching reading. Hopefully, it won't come as too much of a surprise to many educators that children learn to read if they are taught to read.

It is also an interesting comment on our education system that even though 22 out of 25 teachers did not think readiness workbooks were necessary for their groups, all children not in the experimental group were requires to use them. The split in opinion about the necessity of readiness workbooks for the low group may be partially due to the fact that some children don't learn to read very rapidly no matter what you do. As one teacher commented, "It might be just as well to start these children reading slowly without readiness workbooks". Another teacher noted that children who were given only picture books in the first grade began to show less interest in words put on the board than they did when they entered first grade.

Finally the superintendent might be able to save a few more taxpayer dollars by not ordering reading readiness tests. A correlation of .56 might tell us something about a large group, but as a help for the teacher placing an individual child into a top, middle, or low group, readiness tests are not very useful. It is possible that correlations between readiness tests and reading achievement might be getting a curious type of feedback which goes something like this: the readiness test says Johnny isn't ready - so he is not taught reading (is placed in a "readiness group") - so at the end of the year he can't read very well - so the readiness test was right. We found that the procedure of randomly grouping children, teaching them reading from a pre-primer for two weeks, then having the teacher place them into top, middle, and low groups, to be quite satisfactory. At least no child was denied reading instruction based on a kindergarten or first grade teacher's pre-reading opinion, or on the results of a formal test that gives questionable scores.

Bibliography

Blakely, W. Paul and Shadle, Erma M.,"A Study of Two Readiness-for-Reading Programs in Kindergarten", Elementary English, 38:502-505, November 1961

Bradley, Bea trice E.,"An Experimental Study of the Readiness Approach to Reading", Elementary School Journal, 56:262-267,February 1956.

Collins, Mary L. "Determining the Relative Efficiency of Particular Reading Readiness Workbook and a Teacher Developed Program in Promoting Reading Readiness", Unpublished MA Thesis,De Paul University 1960

Docter, Robert L.,"An Investigation of the Effectiveness of Reading Workbooks at the Elementary Level", Unpublished Ed.D.Thesis,University of Southern California,1960.

-----"The Effectiveness of Workbooks in the Elementary School Reading Program", Journal of Educational Research,56:327-329,February 1963.

Durrell,Donald D.,"First Grade Reading Success Study:A Summary", Journal of Education,140:2-6, February 1958.

Fry,Edward, "Developing a Word List for Remedial Reading",Elementary English, November 1957.

Gray, Wm.S."The Teaching of Reading",Encyclopedia of Educational Research, 3rd Edition, Chester Harris, Editor, Macmillan Company, New York 1960.

Gunderson, Doris V.,Research in Reading Readiness, U.S.Dept.of Health, Education, & Welfare Bulletin No.8 1964.

-----Research in Reading at the Primary Level, U.S.Dept of Health, Education, & Welfare Bulletin No.42, 1963.

Hildreth, Gertrude, Nellie Griffiths, and Mary Mc Gauvran,Metropolitan Readiness Tests, Harcourt Brace and World, Inc. ,New York, 1964

Nila, Sr.Mary, "Foundations for a Successful Reading Program",Education 73:269-274, February 1958.

Ploghoft, Milton H. "Do Reading Readiness Workbooks Promote Readiness?" Elementary English,36:424-426, October 1959